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ABSTRACT

This speech proposes an approach to evaluating principals that incorporates strategies for motivating principals to improve. The first step is to abandon the "middle management mentality" by granting full decision-making authority to principals over matters directly pertaining to their schools, such as teacher employment, use of allocated funds, and problem-solving in consultation--on an equal basis--with top-level management. In addition, principals and central office staff should decide on, and participate in, a leadership development program. A system for recognizing performance is mandatory, whether it is in the form of incentive pay, achievement awards, or other imaginative approaches. Administrative evaluation should begin with a broad school board policy calling for supervision and periodic appraisal of employees, with improvement of performance as a top priority. Continuous appraisal of performance in terms of district philosophy and objectives, job descriptions, and performance objectives by leadership personnel will provide the most improvement of instructional and management programs, and will foster development, coordination, and evaluation of learning activities throughout the district. (TE)

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HOW TO EVALUATE AND IMPROVE THE PRINCIPAL'S PERFORMANCE

Wayne R. Bottoni

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of
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NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARD PRESENTATION

How to EVALUATE AND IMPROVE THE PRINCIPAL'S PERFORMANCE

Wayne R. Bottoni

INTRODUCTION

Are effective school principals "people-oriented"? Are they good at establishing positive relationships with teachers, students, families and communities? Are they "doing the right things to provide leadership in this country? These are some of the questions that we, as superintendents and board members, are consistently asked.

In my opinion, and further supported by a recent Phi Delta Kappan Article, December 1983, a principal's job consists primarily of talking. About 90% of the time, management of a school involves face-to-face interchange.

We can draw two important implications from this face-to-face interchange.

1. The principal "shows the flag" of the school through these encounters, and;
2. The principal fosters relationships among people.

But, how can we, superintendents and board members, effectively evaluate "our person in the middle"?

I believe that effective evaluation begins with a positive approach to motivation. All employee evaluations begin with a desire to want that employee to be successful.

Unfortunately some school districts often conduct separate programs to motivate and to evaluate principals as if they were two mutually exclusive processes. Typically, the professed goal of school board policy in these areas is to improve the principal's job performance. However, if evaluation is conducted with a plan for motivation, the result would be little more than institutional harrassment. On the other hand, if an effective program of motivation were in place without regard to evaluation, the result could be motivated personnel with little direction for their efforts.

My presentation today will be based on experiences with a program of motivation and evaluation used successfully during the past five years. Because motivation is frequently ignored when the performance of principals is considered, therefore, my position emphasizes increasing motivation as an avenue for improving.

What are some of the strategies for motivating principals? As a start, abandon the middle management mentality. Principals must be considered as top level management with authority to act accordingly.

Teachers should not be employed for a principal's school unless the principal says, "this is the one I want". This ensures that the principal has a personal interest in the teacher's success. This strategy eliminates predictions from the principal that "the teacher that I was sent will never make it," which often occurs if the final selection of the teacher is made by someone else.

The principal must also be given an allocation of funds for his or her school and the freedom to make decisions relative to the use of those funds. The usual argument against granting this degree of financial autonomy to the principal is that central billing in large volume purchasing can save tax dollars. Another problem often cited is the school system's need for financial accountability.

Both problems can be overcome by a determined and talented superintendent and board of education. For example, a central office can be stocked with items most often purchased by the individual schools. This allows utilization of the bidding process. Through such an agreement, the principal can purchase from the central store or, if outside sources have a better price or quality, the principal maintains the latitude to spend the school's allotment in the manner perceived in the best interest of the school.

A third avenue is that when the principal needs help, do not give ready answers. Force him or her to function as top level management. Two situations that typically arise may illustrate this point. If the situations similar to these are handled correctly, the principal's self-confidence can grow.

1. The principal may call the superintendent with a problem to ask for advice. Assistance can be given in outlining options, but the principal should make the decision.
2. When problems are observed in the school, call them to the attention of the principal, but expect the principal to find the solution. Giving answers strips away self-confidence and helps turn managers into bureaucrats.

3. A third suggestion would be that funds be allocated for a first class leadership development program, with principals given a strong voice in deciding what the programs should be. It is not uncommon for a school board to spend millions of dollars yearly and yet be reluctant to spend three or four thousands of dollars on a good leadership developmental program for principals. If principals and central office staff members meet together and decide upon a staff developmental program and then participate together as colleagues, professional relationships will be enhanced.

The relationship between principals and central office personnel should be one of equality. Central office administrators participate in advisory, consultive, and positive relationship with the principal. When various members of the central office staff exert authority over the principal, the result is often conflicting decisions and directions which results in frustration. This frustrates the principal and may result in a loss of motivation. The line of authority should go directly from the superintendent to the principal.

Finally, a system for reorganizing performance must be adopted. Such a system can range from incentive pay to simple recognition of the school with the highest attendance. Perhaps, to a greater extent than to anyother motivator, principals respond to recognition. Many school officials often assume incorrectly that money causes principals to respond to incentive pay. In most cases, if incentive pay produces results, it is not because of the money involved, but because pay serves as a vehicle through which recognition is granted. Positive recognition can be given in a host of imaginative ways, such as special luncheons, achievement awards, or attending special conferences. The imagination is only the limiting factor.

Basic personnel evaluation is not a complicated process if it consists of two broad components: a definition of desired outcomes and an agreed upon method of assessing the degree to which the outcomes are achieved. Determining a response to the question "what, why, when, who and how" helps assure that the two components are described properly. The question "how" refers to the determination of whether or not the desired outcomes were accomplished.

Traditionally, evaluation schemes have been lengthy and difficult to manage. Programs to evaluate employees are often written in educational jargon, philosophically embracing some vague expression of the ultimate. Such schemes may or may not relate to the identified needs of the school, the developmental needs of the individual being evaluated, or program of evaluation and group motivation.

A major step in administrative evaluation is the establishment of a broad school board policy, void of specific details, best insures the incorporation of the factors mentioned above in the evaluation process. A successful operation depends on the school board setting the parameters and then judging the quality of work within these parameters. For example, the following is taken from one school board policy:

"The Superintendent of Schools shall provide for frequent and competent supervision of each employee and such supervision shall be designed to instruct the employee in the duties and responsibilities of his job, to improve the employee's adjustment and competency in his position, and otherwise to promote the welfare of the employee and of the schools in general. Furthermore, the Superintendent of Schools shall establish and maintain a suitable procedure for adequate the periodic appraisal of the work of each employee and shall maintain suitable records of such appraisals."

This kind of policy has the advantage of establishing purpose, identifying responsibility, and setting forth the task. The policy leaves specifics for the professional practice of the board, superintendent and professional employees.

The program of evaluation and motivation should be a combination of the superintendent and the school board's intent to improve the principal's performance. If improvement is placed among the top objectives of the school board, then several appropriate strategies may be directed toward developing a job climate conducive to positive motivation among principals. However, in adopting these strategies and embarking upon a program to improve principal's performance, school boards and superintendents may find themselves among limited company. An informal survey of six professional journals led to the conclusion that less is written about the climate necessary for a positive motivation among principals than any other typical school board concern such as the decline in federal funding or the drop in school enrollments.

Further review of the literature indicates that the evaluation of administrative and supervisory personnel in education history has suffered from the same factors that have prevented teacher evaluation procedures from producing positive affects. While teacher evaluation systems have focused frequently on teacher characteristics as a measure of teacher effectiveness, and served in some capacity to separate the very inept from the profession, it is usually to find an evaluation system that both teachers and administrators believe contributes to teacher growth and development and seldom is the claim made of any relationship between professional growth and performance.

Principals, have been evaluated indirectly in terms of their ability to satisfy or please their superiors. In fact, the result of such an evaluation has been a negative force, one that operates whenever an administrator or supervisor experiences problems in areas such as student discipline, staff morale, or community dissatisfaction. The administrator who maneuvers in ways to placate various populations with which he has contact is often assumed to be a capable person, an assumption that may have had little relationship to an affirmative leadership or good management style. Because time is a scarce commodity in educational administration, evaluation processes whether they relate to programs or personnel, have received insufficient attention. It can usually be characterized as subject, personal, and ineffective -- a game to be played by the participants with minimum energy and maximum tolerance.

Keep in mind that for more than a decade literature in the field has devoted much attention to behavioral or performance objectives. Given impetus by the writings of Phil Maeger, Janice Scott and Ed Griffin, the focus has been directed toward the ability of the learner to achieve a more precise level of performance resulting from an instructional activity. In the management field the application of this concept has resulted in management by objectives system. All of these systems recognize that the most important element of evaluation is the performance of the individual.

Continuous appraisal of performance in terms of district philosophy and objectives, job descriptions, and performance objectives by personnel in leadership positions will provide the most improvement of instructional and management programs and will foster the development coordination and evaluation of learning activities offered to students in a school.

If we agree that the broad purpose of any evaluation program is to improve the quality of education for students in a given school district, then we must be able to address the entire issue of improved performance.

To improve performance we must have accurate feedback about job performance and the results must be stated clearly and in measurable terms. We must also have clearly stated job responsibilities and standards of performance for our principals. The job description should also specify performance responsibilities.

Let me now share with you a program which is currently used in one high school in Lake County, Illinois.

<u>Statement of Need</u>	Describe briefly the situation or condition that needs to be improved or the problem to be solved.
1. Statement of Objective	Describe the objective in performance terms stating what is to be accomplished in a given period of time.
2. Plan of Activities	Indicate the kinds of activities that you think are necessary to achieve the objective. Include things such as the resources required, the involvement of other persons, monitoring activities, the contributions or involvement of other administrators including the superintendent.
3. Assessment or Measurement of Objective	Include here the data to be collected, the product to be produced, or other means that will enable the evaluator to determine the extent to which the objective has been achieved. This assumes that achievement of the objective can be measured in some reasonable manner. Evidence should be presented in the final conference to substantiate the achievement of the objective.

Obviously, a specific time table respective of the performance objectives must also be addressed.

(See attachment #1 and #2)

Furthermore, each administrator is expected to submit management objectives in the following manner.

(See attachment #3)

Each individual management objective is then addressed in a prescribed manner.

(See attachment #4)

Finally, the extent to which each objective has been achieved must also be considered.

(See attachment #5)

In addition each year a self evaluation form is completed by each administrator and shared with my office.

(See attachment #6)

SUMMARY

Principals must be recognized as "top level" managers and treated accordingly. The organizational structure that seems to enhance the principal's role is a straight line of authority from the superintendent. Paying lip service to the role of the middle manager and to the "concept of team management" demeans the principal. Do not use the term "team management." Many principals perceive it as a scheme to "quiet the troops."

An evaluation program with certain basic components is a must to improve the performance of the principal. But evaluation alone is not enough. If a few basic strategies are adopted that grant decision-making powers to the principal in his or her sphere of operations, if the principal is exposed to a strong leadership development program, and if the principal is given reinforcement through recognition, then improved performance can be expected.